

XI

A CRITICAL GLANCE

1893

.Zola's short stories — His early novels — His sense of poetry and his realism
 — Poetry and science — The futility of literary dogmas
 — The law of change—The Influence of science on literature — Why Zola became a novelist—His attitude towards life and his fellow-men—The Rougon-Macquart series— The order in which it was published and the order in which it should be read — "Rougon-Macquart" and "Robert Macaire"
 — A survey of the volumes — Their human and animal characters — Great variety of their contents — How they were prepared—Zola's alleged ignorance — His handwriting — His style—Some fine pages — Some blunders — Various critical remarks—The series as a whole — A living psychology — Some remarks on translations—A glance at Zola as a playwright.

IN previous chapters one has enumerated the many books — novels, volumes of tales and essays — put forth "by Zola from the time he "began to write until he completed the Rougon-Macquart series. That completion marks a date in his career, and it is now fit one should glance back at the work he had accomplished. His minor writings may be noticed briefly. His first volume, "Les Contes & Ninon," suggests the influence of Victor Hugo largely tempered by that of Alfred de Musset, with here and there, too, some sign of incipient realism. It is immediately apparent that much time and care were spent on the writing of these tales, the style of which is often perfect and always charming. The companion volume, "Nouveaux Contes & Ninon," published ten years later, is inferior to the earlier one, much of the matter contained within its covers being but news-